DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 047 415 EA 003 330

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TITLE Student Allocation Decisions: An Analysis of Different Grouping Procedures and Consequences.
PUB DATE Feb 71
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (55th, New York, New York, February 4-7, 1971.)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Ability Grouping, Equal Education, Grouping Procedures, Race Influences, *Racial Distribution, *Racial Factors, Racial Integration, *Student Characteristics, *Student Grouping, Systems Analysis, *Systems Approach

ABSTRACT

This paper relates racial allocation among and within schools to student behavior, attitudes, and test performance. The main objectives were (1) to relate grouping procedures to specific performance and behavioral criteria, and to attitudinal and perceptual responses of students, including their college plans; and (2) to examine the combined relationships among grouping assignments, test performance, and attitudinal responses of students in different high schools. (LLR)

ED047415

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Student Allocation Decisions: An Analysis of Different Grouping Procedures and Consequences

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EA 003 330

Presented at the American Educational Research Association
Annual Meeting, February, 1971, New York, New York

Introduction

Schools have long been viewed by sociologists as sifting and sorting mechanisms that frequently determine the life chances of individuals or allocate them to different positions within the society.[1] This general approach is highly compatible with a systems analysis model that designates specific inputs, throughputs, and outputs. Many sociological studies have been conducted that relate the social origins and individual attributes of students to their academic success patterns and later careers. More recently, concern with equality of educational opportunity and with the contextual effects of schools as organizations has produced sociological studies that go beyond relating specific inputs directly to outputs and ask whether there are organizational attributes that function as significant intervening variables (or throughputs) in the traditional sifting and sorting model of education.[2]

In beginning to examine the effects of the internal allocation systems of schools, sociologists join an older tradition of studies by educators and educational psychologists concerned with "grouping for instructional purposes." The most controversial and frequently studied grouping practices are, of course, those subsumed under the heading of ability grouping.[3]

The most troublesome decisions school administrators have faced during recent years have usually concerned race. Given a national mandate to integrate schools and to provide equal educational opportunities for

blacks and whites, school administrators have responded in a variety of ways at the local level. Some have stood pat, but most superintendents have made at least minimal efforts toward integrating their schools. Bussing, pairing schools, and otherwise redistricting have been conspicuously unsuccessful in most instances as devices for redistributing the races among the schools. More recently, however, the allocation of racial groups <u>within</u> schools according to curricular and ability group placements has become a volatile issue.[4] The purpose of this study is to apply a systems analysis approach to administrative decisions that affect racial allocation both <u>among</u> and <u>within</u> schools in a suburb of New York City.

For purposes of our analysis, the immediate environment of local school systems can be seen as consisting of a variety of ecological areas usually differentiated by the racial and socio-economic mixes of their members. In some communities these areas comprise identifiable sub-cultures with widely varying orientations and expectations toward the schools, while in others, local ordinances and traditions have produced considerable homogeneity throughout the system environment. Historically, sending districts for individual schools have tended to correspond with identifiable cultural neighborhoods where these exist, and district lines have tended to become political issues only as neighborhoods and communities undergo changes in social composition.

By now it is common knowledge that the average academic levels of students in one school may be several grades above the average performance of students who are the same age in another school in the same system, and

that these differences can usually be predicted from the social inputs to the schools. Moreover, a reinforcement feedback syndrome tends to exist such that the expectation levels for teachers, parents, and students in a given school tend to correspond with performance levels.

In addition to the vast differences between schools, there are, of course, wide differences within them. That is to say, while most of the students in the "best" schools perform above national norms, some students do not; and in the "poor" schools some individuals may perform well above national norms. Tracking or ability groupings have been the usual administrative devices for allocating students to curriculum groups and to classrooms, and these assignments have usually been linked closely with test scores, academic aptitude, and levels of expectation. Thus, when students from quite different social backgrounds are input for the same school, these students will tend to end up in different curriculum and classroom groups after they have undergone screening. In a racially integrated school, this typicially results in lower ability groups that are mostly black, and higher ability groups that are mostly white. Where schools are less integrated, this tends to produce black schools where most students are in lower ability groups and white schools where most students are in higher groups.

School administrators' decision making is relevant for the allocation of races both <u>among</u> and <u>within</u> schools. Universalistic criteria for the assignment of students are typically drawn up at the central office level, but there tends to be considerable slippage in the particularistic direction.

There are some communities where there is blatant gerrymandering of serving districts along racial lines. However, there is probably far more opportunity for invidious factors to influence the assignment of students to classrooms and ability groups within schools. For example, the role played by socio-economic factors in the decision-making of guidance counselors has been documented by Cicourel and Kitsuse.[5]

Most school systems collect and process their records on a cross-sectional basis that conceals the mobility and change patterns of individuals; and, therefore, one of the immediate objectives of the reported research was to develop a prototypical system of pupil accounting based on longitudinal data that would permit monitoring the educational careers of specific cohorts and individuals over time. A second objective was to develop a descriptive system map of how decisions are made to assign pupils to classroom units in different levels and schools in the system. A third objective was to trace the movement of students through the system to see whether invidious distinctions sometimes operate to the disadvantage of students with selected input characteristics including race and socio-economic status. A fourth objective was to relate grouping procedures to specific performance and behavioral criteria and to attitudinal and perceptual responses of students, including college plans. A fifth objective was to examine the combined relationships between grouping assignments, test performance, and attitudinal responses of students in different high schools. This paper focuses primarily on the last two of these objectives.

Methods and Data Sources

Attendance records for the students in the graduating classes of 1965, 1969, and 1970 in the two high schools of a metropolitan suburban community were traced back in time in order to locate the names of all students ever considered to be members of each cohort group. After establishing each population, permanent school records were searched for standardized test scores, attendance records, letter grades, classroom and ability group assignments, sex, race, socioeconomic status, and other relevant information that could be coded for computer analysis. In addition, members of the 1970 senior class in each school completed eleven-page self-administered questionnaires. Interviews were conducted with administrative, guidance, and other relevant school personnnel to determine current and past grouping procedures and policies. Schools, curriculum groups, ability groups, classrooms, and individuals were used as units of analysis. The analysis was predominantly limited to cross tabulations.

The system within which the research was conducted is located in a suburb where the school population is rapidly becoming all black. At the time our data were collected, one high school, school A, had a student population that was over 90% black, and the other, school B, had a population that was approximately 80% white. (The first had 78% black students in 1965, and the second had 88% white students in 1965.) Both were comprehensive high schools, but the predominantly black school employed an elaborate tracking system within curriculum groups that distinguished as

many as eight different levels. The predominantly white school had heterogeneous grouping within curriculum groups. Both of these forms of internal allocation of students had been in operation for many years and were legacies of former administrations. The faculty members in the two schools were largely unfamiliar with the grouping procedures used in the other school. Existing practices were defended within each school, and no evidence of discriminatory practices on the basis of race was found.

Most educators should be familiar with the usual rationale for forming instructional groups that are relatively homogeneous or heterogenrous, and we will not repeat these or argue their relative merits.[6] There are, however, two important questions that can be raised from a systems analysis perspective for which our data can provide some partial answers. First, are shifts in student input characteristics met by identifiable changes in throughput and output characteristics of the schools? Second, are there identifiable outputs related to different allocation systems? In this paper, we will treat race and academic aptitude as input variables; allocation to schools and to grouping arrangements within schools, and grading policies within schools, as throughput variables; and college plans and academic self-image as output variables.

Findings

It appears that the input, output and throughput characteristics of the two schools in our study have not changed in a way that reflects rational decision making on the part of school administrators. The input

characteristics of both schools have changed markedly during recent years. In addition to the increases in the proportions of black students in both schools already noted, the general middle class level of the schools has been lowered somewhat. As might be expected, these changes are reflected by lower scores on standardized tests of ability, with the predominantly white school maintaining higher median scores on these measures (Table I). Curiously, however, the allocation systems appear not to have responded to the lower scores, but rather to have been mainly responsive to external input pressures and to increased opportunities for higher levels of education. The proportions of students in college preparatory curriculum classes have increased in both schools. The proportions of each class entering college in the fall following graduation have tended to keep pace with the increases in college preparatory enrollment, and these proportions are rather similar for both schools. The resulting patterns show both schools in 1965 with higher proportions of students scoring above the national midpoint on both SCAT tests than enroll in college preparatory curriculum or go on to college. But the classes of 1969 and 1970 in school A have considerably larger proportions of students who took college preparatory classes and went on to college than the proportions who scored above the national norms on the SCAT tests. In school B the proportions scoring above national norms on the English SCAT tests have remained higher than the proportions in college curriculum and later attending college; but the Math test proportion is now lower. If the recent trend continues, the

English scores will also be lower than college curriculum and attendance for school B. The fact that actual college enrollments have tended to keep pace with the increases in students enrolled in college preparatory curriculum undoubtedly reflects more liberal admissions policies of colleges and their search for black students, as well as higher expectation levels among students and their parents. However, as we shall see, these increases have also made it more difficult for the schools to define and distribute rewards effectively, especially among black students.

During recent years sociologists have become especially interested in studying the influence of school contexts on attitudes, orientations, and academic performance of students. The impact of student cultures on the performance and orientations of students was the major topic of Coleman's high school study;[7] and a major, and much debated, conclusion of the mammoth study Equality of Educational Opportunity[8] was that the achievement of black students could be improved by integration with white students. Closely related are the studies of Alan Wilson demonstrating higher achievement and aspirations of working class students who attend predominantly middle class schools.[9] The many studies of student press in college tend to fit this model also.[10] A somewhat different approach is represented by James Davis' study showing that there is frequently a frogpond effect such that the students with rather high academic ability, as measured by standardized tests, will tend to get relatively low grades if they attend colleges with high standards, and their self-images and ambition are likely to suffer from comparisons with bright and high performing fellow students.[11] We will

not address ourselves in this short paper to the question of whether performance as measured by test scores is better or worse than might be expected according to some earlier independent measure of ability or potential but rather will confine ourselves to asking how academic self-image and educational plans relate to the allocation and letter grade reward systems in the two schools.

Standardized test scores are typically used in schools to aid decision making regarding the placement of students in track and curriculum groups. Hence one usually finds very strong relationships between placement, test scores, and letter grades at the high school level. Students, in turn, typically respond to their placement, letter grades, and test scores in terms of their self images as students and their educational plans.[12] In order to see how these factors operate in our sample schools, we will examine the class of 1970 intensively since this is the only group for which we have survey data.

In both sample schools academic self-image of students is highly related both to letter grades received and to standardized test scores in the relevant subject areas. (These figures can be found in Tables II, III and IV.) Students who received A's or B's in eleventh grade English tend to perceive themselves as reading and writing better than students who received lower grades; and students who received A's or B's in eleventh grade mathematics tend to see themselves as doing mathematics better than those who received lower grades. In addition, students receiving higher

grades in eleventh grade English and mathematics have higher SCAT scores in the relevant subjects. However, comparisons of the figures at the bases of Tables II-IV reveal that school A awarded somewhat lower grades in English and somewhat higher grades in mathematics than school B.

Mathematics is especially interesting because large proportions of students no longer took mathematics at the eleventh grade level in both schools. Apparently as a reflection of the strict grading policy in math, students who did not take math in the eleventh grade tend to have a higher self image of math ability than those taking math and receiving low grades, despite the generally higher aptitude for math among the latter group. Yet perhaps a more salient effect of context on math self image is revealed by comparison between schools. For example, we find students receiving low grades in math in school B had lower self images in this area than the high graded students in school A, whose aptitude scores they exceeded.

Continuing our examination of school context on self image, in the rightmost columns of Table II we find that proportions of students believing they read above average, average, and below average are almost identical in the two schools even though the standardized test scores are demonstrably higher in school B. Self image of writing is somewhat more heterogeneous in school A than school B (Table III). But self image of mathematics performance is clearly higher in school A than in school B even though math aptitude scores are higher in school B. Thus a frogpond effect appears to operate as evidenced by the fact that student self images respond

in a predictable manner to the rewards assigned by teachers in particular subjects in both schools, even though subject ability levels are vastly different according to national norms. Moreover, within school A (and, to a lesser extent, school B), there appears to be a frogpond within the frogpond. That is, while students not taking math have lower scores than those taking math, they have higher self image of performance than those who took math and received low grades.

The difference between the racial composition of the two schools raises the obvious question whether academic self image, letter grades, and test scores vary appreciably by race within each school. These figures are summarized in Table V. The somewhat higher socioeconomic circumstances of the white students in both schools are reflected by their higher standardized test scores and letter grades (class rank), but academic self-image does not reflect these differences in both schools. In school A there are no appreciable differences between the academic self images of the blacks and whites, but in school B self perception of reading and writing ability is somewhat lower among the blacks.

Responses to the three academic self image questions suggest that the frogpond effects found in Tables II, III, and IV are not working uniformly for blacks and whites. There is some evidence that the minority blacks in school B may have slightly lowered self images as a result of comparisons with a majority white group that performs higher academically; but the majority blacks in school A show no evidence of comparing themselves with their minority white classmates. What appears to be happening is that

black and white students tend to use racial groups as comparative reference groups in assessing their own academic performance levels. Hence even though the small group of whites in school A score high on tests and receive unusually high grades, they do not permit these to inflate academic self image relative to their white peers in school B. Nevertheless, the black minority in school B does have consistently lower academic self image than the majority black students in school A. To this extent they appear to suffer from being unable to avoid comparisons with the majority of whites in their school.

Curiously, the allocation systems of the two schools and the educational expectations of students do not reflect the above difference. The proportions of black and white students in college preparatory curriculum in school A are almost identical, but there is a considerably larger proportion of white students than black in the college preparatory curriculum in school B. However, the proportions of black students expecting to complete four or more years of college is larger among black than white students in both schools. Clearly the relationships between the throughput (student allocation) and outputs (educational expectations) cannot be similar for whites and blacks in view of these figures. It also follows that, since the allocation of letter grades favors the whites in both schools, while college expectations are higher among the blacks, the letter grades relate somewhat differently to educational plans than is usually found to be the case.

Examining the combined relationships among letter grades (class rank), curriculum, and educational expectations within the two schools, (Table VI), we find that curriculum is very highly related to college plans in both sample schools. Large majorities enrolled in college preparatory curriculum in both schools expect to complete four years of college, and only minorities of those not in college preparatory classes expect to complete four years of college. However, non-college curriculum students who expect to complete four years of college are far more characteristics of the majority black school. Moreover, class rank appears to have a significant impact on educational expectations only among the college preparatory students in the majority white school. Both these findings support our earlier contention that schools are having difficulty getting black students to accept traditional definitions of academic rewards and of academic potential.

It is possible to look at these relationships in somewhat more detail despite the small number of cases because of their lack of ambiguity (Table VII). We find, for example, that although a majority of the small group of white students in college preparatory classes in school A expect to complete four years of college, not one of the non-college preparatory white students expects to complete college. Similarly, in the majority white school, just three out of forty-one white students (7%) in non-college preparatory classes expect to complete college, while eight out of eighteen (44%) of the black students in non-college preparatory classes have high expectations. Once again we find that only the white students appear to accept curriculum definitions set within the system.

A further elaboration of this finding of diminished school influence on the college plans of black students is found by looking more closely at the internal allocation system of the predominantly black school A which practicies ability grouping in English and Math. To do this we shall consider the college plans of the black seniors as these are a function of curriculum and 12th grade English track placement as well as class rank. For this purpose, the college preparatory curriculum will be split into an upper, middle, and low group according to the English class placement, while the various non-college preparatory English groups will be treated together (Table VIII).[13] By doing this we discover that class rank is positively related to college plans in all but the lowest college preparatory section, where it shows a negative relationship! That is, students in the low college preparatory English group aspire to college irrespective of their class rank; for them, the reward structure of the school, its grading system, has no discernible impact in this crucial regard. Other data, not presented here, suggests that the low C.P. section students are low in ability (as measured by standardized aptitude tests) and socio-economic status (as assessed by father's occupation) relative to the other C.P. sections and even to some of the non-C.P. sections. Thus when we focus more closely on the internal allocation system of school A, we find evidence that the traditional reward structure of the school is accepted least among those students in the C.P. program who would have been most likely denied access to college preparatory curriculum a few years ago.

Discussion

Using a systems analysis perspective, we noted that our two high schools were receiving very different student inputs in terms of racial characteristics and scholastic aptitude as measured by standardized tests. Standardized test scores had dropped rapidly during recent years in both schools but proportions of students enrolled in college preparatory curriculum and going on to college were roughly equivalent for the schools and increasing somewhat. From these figures we concluded that internal allocations and outputs of the school were more responsive to general secular trends toward higher levels of education and encouraging college attendance among blacks than to academic ability of students. Moreover, we found that relatively high proportions of black students expected to complete four or more years of college even among those not enrolled in college preparatory classes and receiving low grades. Our interpretation of these findings was that traditional definitions and rewards of high schools were not being accepted by black students who saw opportunities for college despite rather poor academic records. In short, we found a frogpond effect such that high academic self-image and high educational expectations combined with low performance levels among blacks; and these were supported by relative isolation from large numbers of high performing students and by open admissions policies of colleges. Black students in the majority white school displayed somewhat lower academic self image but had equally high educational expectations.

As might be expected, these circumstances have created problems among school staff, particularly among those interested in maintaining traditional academic orientations. Many instances of related strain were forthcoming in staff interviews, but perhaps none more striking than the teacher who complained that when students were threatened with lower grades for incomplete or poor quality assignments, they would now accept the lower grade rather than doing the extra work, confident that they would have relatively little difficulty getting into college with lower grades. In short, they complained that the high school was no longer able to exercise social control over students through the use of academic sanctions.

Students may be correct in their assessment of their situation, judging from the high proportions of students attending college from the senior classes we have studied. If, however, <u>success</u> at college is at all related to performance levels in high school, then the high school is merely engaging in a holding operation of deferred failure, and it will be left to the colleges to "cool out"[14] large numbers of those they accept. There is already considerable evidence of new allocation systems emerging at the college level to accomodate lower levels of academic performance. It remains to be seen whether these changes at the college level will be readily accepted by large numbers of black students and whether graduates of such programs will fare well in the job market.

But how does all this affect decision-making among school administrators? It is patently obvious that the allocations system of the schools we have studied have been unencumbered by any rational planning or

decision-making by administrators during recent years. The schools we have studied appear to fit a primitive supply and demand model where the black students have a seller's market over which the high school has no effective control. White students, in contrast, seem to continue to accept the older market definition. In effect, the high schools are trying to process students uniformly but find themselves offering two different products for which different standards are applied by the consumers.

In the aftermath of reactions to his study Equality of Educational Opportunity, Coleman wrote a provocative article on the "Concept of Educational Opportunity,"[15] in which he maintained that a performance standard for equality of educational opportunity was now being applied such that the difference in achievement at grade 12 between the average black and white is the degree of inequality of opportunity; and the reduction of that inequality is the responsibility of the school. Our findings suggest an alternative standard, the proportion of students admitted to and completing various levels of higher education. According to Coleman's performance standard, the schools in our study do not provide equal opportunity for blacks, but according to our college admissions standards, they may not provide equal opportunities for whites. Many would argue that college admissions are far more important now and performance levels will follow in time. But it may well be that difference in employment opportunities will outweigh both of these in the long run.

If administrators are to make rational decisions about student

allocation decisions they must have longitudinal data on students that link the school careers of <u>individuals</u> with their behavior at later points in time. If black students with low standardized test scores in non-college preparatory courses fare poorly in college, it would behoove administrators to make this known throughout their own systems (regardless of whether they wish to maintain old standards). However, if these students do equally well in college, then the allocation and reward system of the high school is not serving its avowed purpose and the schools should search for alternatives. Under any circumstances, our data suggest that school administrators reexamine student allocation processes within their school systems with the aim of better understanding their effect. If the cost of a rapidly changing "environment for output" on a traditional allocation and reward system is to severely diminish school influence on students, school systems may wish to experiment with grouping and grading procedures.

TABLE I

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF SENIOR CLASSES IN TWO SAMPLE SCHOOLS FOR YEARS 1965, 1969, AND 1970

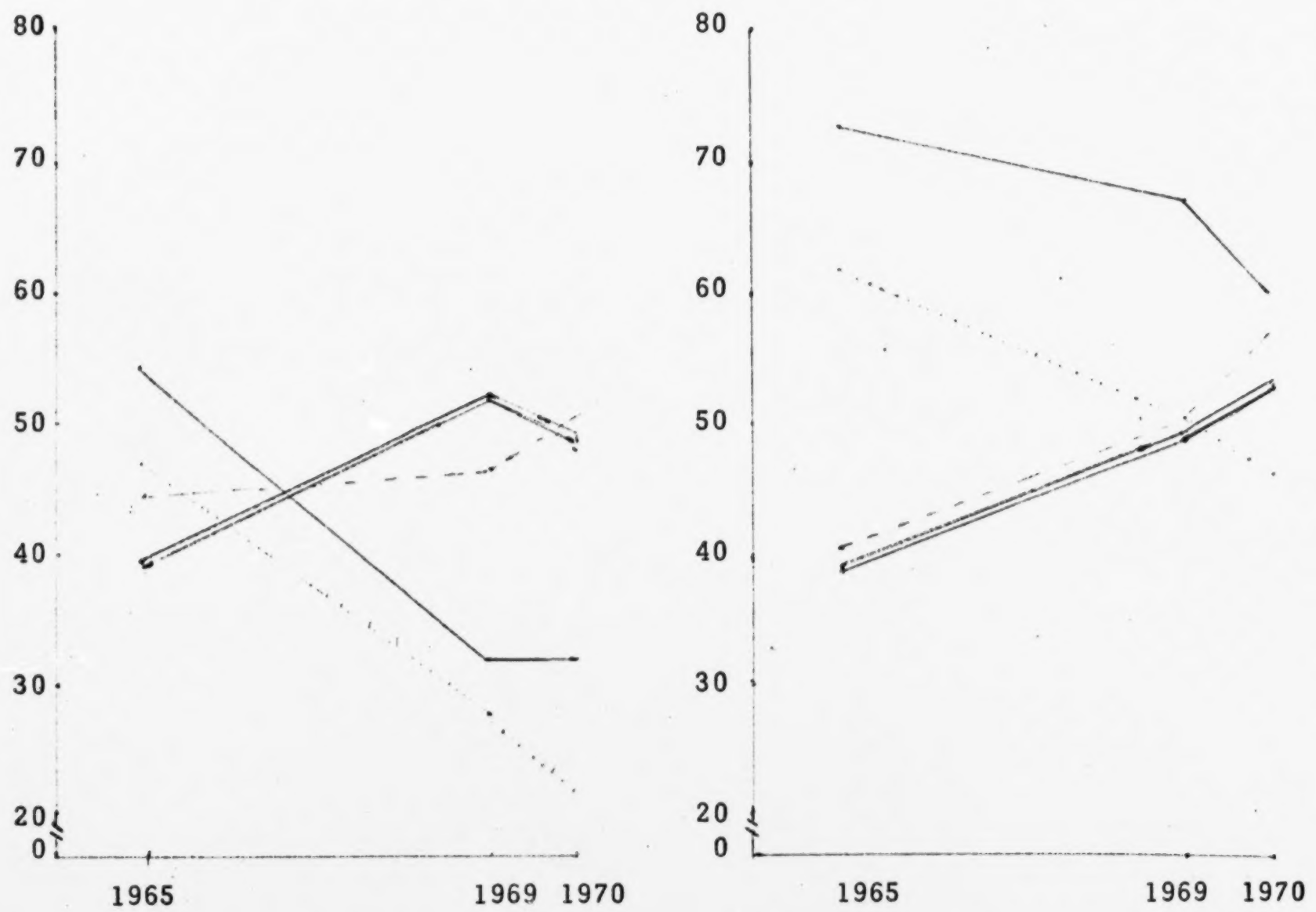

TABLE II

ELEVENTH GRADE ENGLISH LETTER GRADES BY SELF IMAGE OF READING ABILITY AND AVERAGE LANGUAGE SCAT NATIONAL PERCENTILE LEVEL

School A
Eleventh Grade English Grades

Reading Self Image*	A or B	C, D, or E	Total
Above Average	47%	27%	34% (66)
Average	48%	59%	55% (36)
Below Average	5%	14%	11% (24)
Total	32%	68%	100%
$\overline{m}$ Language Scat Percentile	(60)	(38)	(45)
N=	62	131	193

School B
Eleventh Grade English Grades

Reading Self Image*	A or B	C, D, or E	Total
Above Average	52%	20%	34% (75)
Average	40%	69%	57% (48)
Below Average	9%	11%	10% (52)
Total	44%	56%	100%
$\overline{m}$ Language Scat Percentile	(70)	(49)	(58)
N=	58	74	132

*The closed response questionnaire item stated "How well would you say you can read for someone your age? Above Average, About Average, or Below Average."

TABLE III

ELEVENTH GRADE ENGLISH LETTER GRADES BY SELF IMAGE OF WRITING ABILITY AND AVERAGE LANGUAGE SCAT NATIONAL PERCENTILE LEVEL

School A
Eleventh Grade English Grades

Writing Self Image*	A or B	C, D, or E	Total
Above Average	42%	21%	28% (60)
About Average	48%	63%	58% (39)
Below Average	10%	16%	14% (38)
Total	32%	68%	100%
$\bar{m}$ Language Scat Percentile	(60)	(38)	(45)
N=	60	128	188

School B
Eleventh Grade English Grades

Writing Self Image*	A or B	C, D, or E	Total
Above Average	41%	7%	22% (76)
About Average	53%	77%	67% (55)
Below Average	5%	16%	11% (42)
Total	44%	56%	100%
$\bar{m}$ Language Scat Percentile	(70)	(49)	(58)
N=	58	74	132

*"How well would you say you can write compositions for someone your age? Above Average, About Average, Below Average."

TABLE IV

ELEVENTH GRADE MATHEMATICS LETTER GRADES BY SELF IMAGE OF MATHEMATICS ABILITY AND AVERAGE MATH SCAT NATIONAL PERCENTILE LEVEL

School A
Eleventh Grade Math Grades

Math Self Image*	A or B	C, D, or E	No Math	Total
Above Average	41%	14%	22%	22% (48)
Average	48%	54%	61%	55% (34)
Below Average	11%	32%	17%	23% (25)
Total	21%	48%	31%	100%
$\overline{m}$ Math Scat Percentile	(45)	(36)	(26)	(35)
N=	44	100	64	208

School B
Eleventh Grade Math Grades

Math Self Image*	A or B	C, D, or E	No Math	Total
Above Average	35%	7%	8%	11% (67)
Average	59%	46%	50%	49% (48)
Below Average	6%	47%	42%	40% (40)
Total	13%	42%	45%	100%
$\overline{m}$ Math Scat Percentile	(70)	(51)	(41)	(49)
N=	17	57	62	136

*The closed response questionnaire item stated, "How well would you say you can do math for someone your age? Above Average, About Average, or Below Average."

TABLE V

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS AND RESPONSES OF BLACK AND WHITE STUDENTS WITHIN A PREDOMINANTLY BLACK AND A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE HIGH SCHOOL

		School A		School B	
		Black	White*	Black	White
Average 11th Grade National Language Scat Percentile		43%	54%	46%	60%
Average 11th Grade National Math Scat Percentile		33	54	38	52
Percent in Top 40% of Class		35	70	21	45
Say they read:	Above Average	30	26	18	34
	Average	55	68	66	54
	Below Average	12	5	11	10
Say they write:	Above Average	23	25	14	25
	Average	60	50	65	65
	Below Average	16	25	20	10
Say they do math:	Above Average	21	21	8	13
	Average	57	63	47	47
	Below Average	22	16	42	37
Proportion Enrolled in College Preparatory Curriculum		61	57	50	67
Expect to Complete Four or More Years of College**		60	42	61	50
N***		255	19	38	127

*This group includes four oriental students

**"How far do you really think you will go in school?"

***The N varies slightly for some items

TABLE VI

PROPORTION OF SENIORS EXPECTING TO COMPLETE FOUR OR MORE YEARS OF COLLEGE BY CURRICULUM AND CLASS RANK IN TWO HIGH SCHOOLS

School A

	College Preparatory		Not College Preparatory	
	Rank		Rank	
	Top 40%	Bottom 60%	Top 40%	Bottom 60%
	73%	66%	41%	36%
N	(83)	(65)	(27)	(47)

School B

	College Preparatory		Not College Preparatory	
	Top 40%	Bottom 60%	Top 40%	Bottom 60%
	79%	67%	18%	14%
N	(47)	(48)	(17)	(37)

TABLE VII

PROPORTION PLANNING TO COMPLETE FOUR YEARS OF COLLEGE
BY CURRICULUM, RACE AND SCHOOL

School A

College Preparatory		Non-College Preparatory	
Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites
73%	67%	35%	--
(151)	(9)	(92)	(6)

School B

College Preparatory		Non-College Preparatory	
Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites
83%	68%	44%	7%
(18)	(81)	(18)	(41)

TABLE VIII

PROPORTION OF BLACK STUDENTS IN SCHOOL A PLANNING TO COMPLETE FOUR YEARS OF COLLEGE BY 12TH GRADE ENGLISH TRACK AND CLASS RANK

Upper College Preparatory	
Top 40%	Bottom 60%
81%	64%
(36)	(11)

Middle College Preparatory	
Top 40%	Bottom 60%
77%	56%
(26)	(16)

Lower College Preparatory	
Top 40%	Bottom 60%
60%	74%
(15)	(35)

Non-College Preparatory	
Top 40%	Bottom 60%
52%	36%
(21)	(47)

Footnotes

[1]Virtually all of the better known community studies by American sociologists, beginning with the Lynds' classic work (Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd, Middletown: A Study in American Culture, New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929) use this model at least implicitly, and one text in the sociology of education (Robert J. Havighurst and Bernice L. Neugarten, Society and Education, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1962) is largely organized around this model.

[2]In an early effort to study the role of community and school contexts on college success, Rogoff found that both type and size of community affected academic aptitude and plans when socioeconomic status was also taken into consideration. Natalie Ragoff, "Local Social Structure and Educational Selection," in A.H. Halsey, Jean Floud and C. Arnold Anderson, eds., Education, Economy and Society, New York: The Free Press, 1961, pp. 241-251. The use of such contextual features has become standard procedure among sociologists during the 1960's.

[3]For an excellent review of the literature on grouping see Miriam L. Goldberg, A. Harry Passow, Joseph Justman, The Effects of Ability Grouping, New York: Teachers College Press, 1966.

[4]Washington, D.C., for example, officially eliminated its tracking system as an aftermath of the Passow study, and in 1968 a New York City suburb commissioned a Teachers College study directed at evaluating local grouping practices that the local blacks claimed were discriminatory.

[5]Aaron V. Cicourel and John I. Kitsuse, The Educational Decision-Makers, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963. In a previous investigation by one of the authors, examination of school records in a suburban community revealed rather clear evidence of discrimination against blacks. While official policy implied that standardized test scores and academic records were the primary factors in ability group assignments, it was found that blacks were assigned disproportionately to slower groups and whites to faster groups when their test scores were the same. That is to say, whatever additional factors were used in making assignments worked to the detriment of the blacks more than the so-called culturally biased tests would have had these been used as the only criteria. Moreover, the school was able to maintain a mobility myth to the effect that movement was frequent between levels, and that across level enrollment by individual students was common, when neither was true.

[6]An excellent summary of these can be found in Goldberg, et al., op. cit.

[7]James S. Coleman, The Adolescent Society, New York: The Free Press, 1961.

[8]James S. Coleman, et al., Equality of Educational Opportunity, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966.

[9]Alan B. Wilson, "Social Stratification and Academic Achievement," Education in Depressed Areas, A.H. Passow, ed., New York: Teachers College Press, 1963, and Alan B. Wilson, The Consequences of Segregation: Academic Achievement in a Northern Community, Berkeley: The Glendessary Press, 1969.

[10]See especially D.C. Thistlewaite, and N. Wheeler, "Effects of Teacher and Peer Subcultures Upon Student Aspiration," Journal of Educational Psychology, 1966, Vol. 57, pp. 35-47.

[11]James A. Davis, "The Campus as A Frogpong: An Application of the Theory of Relative Deprivation to Career Decisions of College Men," American Journal of Sociology, 1966, Vol. 72, pp. 1-16.

[12]David E. Wilder, et al., Actual and Perceived Consensus on Educational Goals Between School and Community, Report to the U.S.O.E., New York: Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University, 1968.

[13]The grouping system of school A in English is homogeneous by ability within curriculum groups. For the class of 1970, in 12th grade English there were four college preparatory tracks, 2 general tracks, and 2 business tracks. Teacher evaluation and scores on standardized reading tests served as the basis for grouping decisions within curriculum units.

[14] For a discussion of the California junior colleges from this perspective see Burton Clark, "The 'Cooling Out' Function of Higher Education," in Halsey, Floud and Anderson, op. cit., pp. 513-523.

[15]James S. Coleman, "The Concept of Equality of Educational Opportunity," Equal Educational Opportunity, Harvard Education Review, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1969, pp. 9-24.